

March 20, 2005

Freedom

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan



*Marines take aim
at Konar insurgents*
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Sgt. Frank Magni

New caretakers

Republic of Korea Army Lt. Col. Choi, Ho (left center), Bagram Airfield Korean Hospital commander, leads a ribbon cutting ceremony with other medical professionals at Bagram Mar. 7. The ceremony symbolized his group of soldiers from the 924th ROK Medical Support Group assuming responsibility for hospital operations for the next six months.

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Marine Lance Cpl. Josh Ploetz, a 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines, machine gunner, looks over the sights of his M-240G machine gun as a CH-47 Chinook helicopter prepares to drop medical supplies near his position high in the Hindu Kush mountains. The Marines were in eastern Afghanistan's Konar Province conducting Operation Spurs in an effort to deter anti-Coalition militants.

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CFC-A Commander – Lt. Gen. David Barno
Public Affairs Officer – Col. Tom R. MacKenzie

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Freedom Watch Staff

Commander – Maj. Steven J. Wollman

NCOIC – Staff Sgt. Monica R. Garreau

Editor – Spc. Chris Stump

Journalists – Sgt. Frank Magni,

Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl, Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons,

Spc. Dijon Rolle, Spc. Cheryl Ransford

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Coalition helps Afghans prepare for coming floods

Story and photos by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

PAKTIA PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Record snowfall throughout southeastern Afghanistan has created ideal conditions for flooding as the snow begins to melt.

In response to the anticipated flooding, local leaders, international relief agencies and Soldiers from the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team are working together to create a flood response plan for the area. Leaders from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development sent out a request for an emergency meeting to address the problem. The meeting was held Mar. 2.

"We are here today to come up with a solution to prevent any more death or destruction," said Paktia Police Chief Hai-Gul Suliman Khuil.

"We need to have more discussions like this, because it is our job to protect the people," he said. "We need everyone's help."

Khuil hosted the first of several planned meetings to coordinate relief efforts. The group's solutions include sending out survey teams to collect information from surrounding villages, building flood retention walls, and setting up emergency shelters and food banks for residents.

Local leaders will have to act quickly. Floodwaters are expected to hit within the next few weeks as the weather warms up.

In addition to the melting snow, daily rainfall is also adding to the problem.

The excess water is already causing local rivers to swell and wash away roads and houses.



A local man stands near a water-logged roadway in Paktia Province. This winter's record snowfall has left standing water in many areas and the possibility of flooding that the Coalition and local leaders are addressing.

Several deaths have already been reported.

Local residents wade through muddy streets, pushing wheelbarrows full of snow and ice in an attempt to clear roads and walkways.

"We're going to be limited as to what we can do at this point," said the Gardez PRT's Civil Military Operations Center officer in charge, Maj. James Hawver, who also acts as the PRT's deputy commander.

"We plan to help pre-position humanitarian aid supplies like blankets, tarps and food items throughout the area," he said.

Hawver, who has experience working as a flood coordinator in the United States, said they are also looking at getting supplies to hard-hit areas via airdrops.

In addition to the Coalition's continued support, representatives from several

organizations including the United States Agency for International Development are contributing their resources.

"We want the (Afghan) government to take the lead," said USAID Field Program Officer Bob Sammon.

"We're here to help and provide assistance and funding for long-term solutions to problems like these," he said. "Right now, we have to decide what the major priorities are and how we can collectively use our resources to meet those needs."

Like many areas in Afghanistan, the mountainous region has not experienced this much snow or rainfall in several years. Many of the houses and villages here are built in low-lying areas with little or no vegetation to absorb the water or prevent the soil from washing away, said Sammon.

The roads in the area are already in poor condition, and the floods threaten to destroy what is left of them and cut residents and commuters off from medical care and the outside world. This could cause more fatalities and disrupt local trade and commerce.

But, with planning and the combined efforts of the Coalition and local leaders, said Sammon, everything should be in place to protect those in disaster areas.



Representatives from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees look over the meeting agenda during an emergency flood planning meeting at the governor's compound in Paktia Province Mar. 2.

Marines score success in Khowst Province

Story and photos by
Marine Cpl. Rich Mattingly
3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment

KHOWST PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Under the light of a pale, yellow moon, the Marines moved swiftly across the cold and barren wadi. Hand and arm signals silently mobilized squads and fire teams into position.

Shifting in and out of the shadows of trees and low rock walls in the surrounding fields as they neared Sabari village in eastern Afghanistan's Khowst Province, the Marines of "America's Battalion," 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, sealed a seamless cordon and prepared to search for several men suspected of terrorist activity against Afghans and Coalition forces in the area.

Only when the night's reverie was split by calls for surrender and the roar of AH-1 Cobra gunships appearing a few hundred feet overhead did the inhabitants realize they had been surrounded.

By the break of dawn, the battalion was well on its way to completing one of its most successful operations in the region.

"We moved over 44 kilometers at night, dismounted a few (kilometers) away, and surrounded the village, where we believed the enemy to be hiding, by moving in on foot," said Capt. Ken Barr.

"Our enemies had never seen anything like this before, so they weren't ready for us — and they had no chance to escape into the mountains," further explained the commander of Weapons Co., 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines. His company planned the operation over the past month and a half, gathering key human intelligence on anti-Coalition militia forces operating in Khowst Province.

Over the course of two days, Weapons and Headquarters and Service companies, which combined forces for the operation, set up shop in the suspected terrorists' backyards. Both companies are organized as rifle companies in the battalion's expansive area of responsibility.

The Marines found eight men believed to be members of anti-Coalition militias and seized a significant amount of illegal weapons and explosives.

All of this was accomplished without a single shot being fired.

The relationship they have fostered in the area over the last few months has improved the Marines' successes and ability to go in hard and fast without disrupting friendly ties.

"The local populace has begun to trust



Above: Marine Rifleman Lance Cpl. Kevin Neale (left), of Weapons Co., searches a basement room for weapons during cordon and search operations in eastern Afghanistan's Khowst Province.

Left: Marine Platoon Commander 2nd Lt. Luke Lazzo, Weapons Co., 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines, takes a knee and gets his bearing before leading his Marines to their destination.

us more and more as we've built a relationship with them through local patrols with Afghan police and the medical and humanitarian relief efforts we've performed," said Weapons Co. Platoon Commander 2nd Lt. Luke Lazzo.

"We try to stress to them that it's their community and they have to take responsibility for the actions of those they live with. We're here to help them with that. That allows us to go into a town the way we did and successfully find our enemies without too much resistance from the locals," he said.

The Marines and Sailors of America's Battalion operate with a high level of cultural and societal awareness and attention to detail in order to strike a balance with the local populace during security and stability operations, said Barr. It's a reflection of his Marines' professionalism as they complete more complicated missions.

When Weapons Co. entered the village, the commander's first action was to meet with the village elders and give them a chance to give up the men who were wanted in connection with recent attacks.

"We went to the village elders and mullahs and asked them how they would like us to handle searches of houses in their villages," said Barr. "We told them that if they would give up the men responsible for attacking Marines and Afghan forces in the area, then we wouldn't be forced to cordon and search their villages. The Marines and Sailors have upheld their end of things admirably, which improves our chances of even more future successes."

It was that approach that led to the operation's success, said America's Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Norm Cooling.

"It's easy to get on line and fight a clearly defined enemy," said Cooling. "In our situation, you can't always locate, close with and destroy the enemy in a straightforward manner. You have to establish human intelligence relationships to locate the enemy and then devise creative ways to close with him."

"While doing that here in Sabari, we sent a significant message to the villagers that by helping us, they can help make their town and their country a safer place," he said.

FOB Tiger Soldiers adopt Afghan village

Story and photos by Spc. Dijon Rolle
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE TIGER, Afghanistan — It all started with a few simple phone calls and emails back home to loved ones. The end result — several boxes of shoes, clothing and school supplies sent to deployed Soldiers for distribution to the people of Afghanistan.

The donations come from all over the United States and continue to pour into the Bagram and Kandahar airfield post offices.

Churches, businesses, schools, and individuals have sent everything from crayons and stuffed animals to washboards and wool blankets.

Soldiers from Forward Operating Base Tiger in southern Afghanistan are gathering these donations and delivering them to villages throughout their area of operations. What makes their mission so unique is that the group has collected, organized and distributed these items on their own. The units serving here have come together to create their own "Adopt a Village" program.

The Soldiers volunteer to hand out the donations on their own time, after working on the Tarin Kowt road construction project during the day.

"It's a good thing and I'm proud to be a part of it," said Staff Sgt. Broderick Smith, a construction and heavy equipment supervisor for Company B, 926th Engineer



Above: A Soldier from the 528th Eng. Bn. passes out pencils to local children during a visit to southern Afghanistan's Damishak Village. Soldiers distributed shoes, clothing, school supplies and toys.

Left: A young Afghan boy sits with his share of toys and school supplies during a visit from Soldiers serving at FOB Tiger. The group delivered numerous boxes of humanitarian aid to villagers during their visit.

Battalion. "We've received so much support from everyone back home. They've sent boxes and boxes of shoes and clothes, everything," he said. "I was surprised at how much actually came."

Broderick said that he and the Soldiers from his unit began collecting donations after several emails and phone calls were sent to the unit's family readiness group.

Others just saved things out of their own

care packages to give away.

"It's not a huge gesture," said Cpl. Nicole Elder, a Co. B, 204th Eng. Bn., administrative assistant. "It's something small that we wanted to do just to give them some basic things. Things that they can use to survive."

These visits may seem small, but they're

See Adopt, Page 12

Enduring Voices

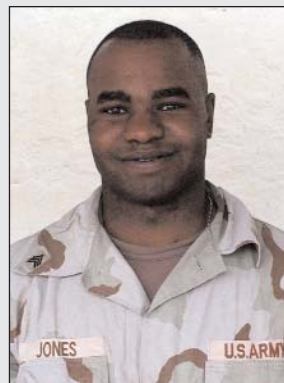
What is one mission you've completed here that you will always remember?



Spc. David Phillips
125 MI Bn., LRSD
"Providing assistance for a vehicle accident and saving people's lives in Herat."



Capt. Derrick Kooker
TF 168
"Helping a village with a flu epidemic by delivering medications."



Sgt. Brian Jones
551st MP Co.
"Training the ANP in Kwojaomari District."



Spc. Joshua Gould
Co. A, 2nd Bn., 27th Inf. Rgt.
"My last mission. It showed the determination of my leadership to get the mission done."

QRF enhances security at Ghazni PRT

Story by Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons
and Spc. Chris Stump
17th Public Affairs Detachment

GHAZNI PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan — When Soldiers head out on combat missions, they know if they find themselves in a situation warranting assistance, the quick reaction force at their base can respond at a moment's notice.

The Soldiers at the Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team in central Afghanistan perform daily patrols in the area to ensure the security of themselves and the people in the region, with a force dedicated to respond to the needs of these patrols.

These QRF Soldiers are on call 24 hours a day to respond to any situation that may arise in the area.

"We can respond to anything from a broken down vehicle to a firefight," said Military Policeman Sgt. Joshua Henson, of the 25th Military Police Company, whose main mission as QRF is to reinforce elements already on the ground.

"The Number 1 reason the QRF is such a valuable asset is how fast we are ready to go," he said.

But the QRF isn't just about quickness. The Soldiers move out with a considerable



Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons

Sgt. Joshua Henson (left) and Sgt. Shawn McKenna, both from the Ghazni PRT, discuss information they received from a local elder, while Spc. Carol Russell provides security from the turret of an up-armored HMMWV.

amount of firepower.

The QRF is always mounted, so the Soldiers can bring a lot of weapons to an area quickly, said Sgt. Shawn McKenna, 25th MP Co.

Knowing they're backed up with a quick responding, heavily armed force gives the Soldiers on patrol an added sense of security.

"It helps out those on patrol to know there are people back at the base ready to help them at the drop of a hat," said Henson. "It

gives them extra confidence."

Although the QRF's responsibility is to back up those outside the wire, they actively show their presence in the area on patrols.

"We patrol throughout the day, as well as being on-call 24 hours a day," said Henson.

During the winter months, the QRF Soldiers also evaluate the roads to see if they are passable, or find alternate routes to places they may have to go.

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Religious Services Around the CJOA

Kabul

Sunday

0630 - Christian Worship Service
1030 - Christian Worship Service
(U.S. Embassy Marine Lounge)
1430 - Christian Worship Service
1530 - Small Group Study 301
1600 - Small Group Study 201

Tuesday

1530 - Small Group Study 301

Wednesday

1430 - Small Group Study 401

Friday

0830 - Latter-Day Saints
1330 - Small Group Study 101
1430 - Coffee House Ministry

Saturday

1130 - Catholic Mass

*** All times
Zulu/GMT**

Camp Phoenix

Sunday

0430 - Catholic (Italian)
0530 - Non-Denominational Prot.
1330 - Catholic (French)
1530 - Non-Denominational Prot.

Tuesday

1430 - Bible Study

Wednesday

1430 - Gospel Bible Study

Saturday

1430 - Gospel Worship Service

FOB Salerno

Sunday

0300 - Foundations Bible Class
0400 - Traditional Prot. Worship
0530 - Catholic Mass
0730 - Latter-Day Saints
0830 - Gospel Service
1400 - Inspirational Movie Night

Saturday

1500 - Contemporary Prot.

Bagram Airfield

Sunday

0400 - Liturgical Prot.
0530 - Roman Catholic Mass
0830 - Latter-Day Saints
0700 - Traditional Prot.
1115 - Korean Language Prot.
1300 - Gospel Service

Monday

1400 - Gospel Choir Rehearsal

Tuesday

1400 - Gospel Bible Study
1545 - Prot. Music Rehearsal

Wednesday

1600 - Catholic Music Rehearsal

Thursday

1430 - Gospel Choir Rehearsal

Friday

1430 - Jewish Prayer
1500 - Women's Bible Study

Saturday

0500 - Seventh-Day Adventist
1330 - Korean Choir Rehearsal
1515 - Roman Catholic Mass
1630 - Prot. Choir Rehearsal

Daily, Monday-Friday

0700 - Roman Catholic Mass
0745 - Noon-Day prayer

Kandahar Airfield

Sunday

0430 - Catholic Mass
0500 - Bible Study (325th FSB)
0630 - Prot. Worship
1330 - Gospel Choir Practice
1400 - Sunday School
1530 - Gospel Service

Monday

1300 - Gospel Choir Practice

Tuesday

1430 - Purpose-driven Life Study
1300 - Gospel Choir Practice
1430 - Praise Team Practice
1530 - Bible Study

Wednesday

1300 - Gospel Choir Practice
1430 - Praise Team Practice
1530 - Prot. Worship

Thursday

1430 - Praise Team Practice
1500 - Latter-Day Saints

Friday

0830 - Islamic Prayers
1330 - Jewish Sabbath Prayers

Saturday

0400 - Men's Breakfast
1300 - Catholic Mass
1430 - Praise Team Practice

Daily, Monday-Friday

0330 - Catholic Mass

Asadabad clinic transferred to Afghans

Local doctors assume control of PRT facility

Story and photo by
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

ASADABAD PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan — Two years ago, the Coalition opened a clinic at the Asadabad Provincial Reconstruction Team in eastern Afghanistan's Konar Province. The clinic staff initially provided care to Coalition forces, and later began treating Afghans as well.

They eventually began training Afghan doctors, integrating them into the clinic, with a goal of some day handing this clinic over to the Afghans.

That "some day" turned into late January, when Afghan doctors stepped in to fill their role in the clinic, assuming responsibility for the treatment of nearly every patient who passes through the door, Coalition or Afghan.

"This isn't our clinic anymore," said Sgt. 1st Class Stephen S. Moreno, the 2nd Forward Surgical Team's acting first sergeant. "It's theirs."

Moreno and the rest of his Soldiers have worked with the Afghan doctors at the clinic since December. In just two months, they watched a great transformation take place.

"When we first got here, the doctors kind



Dr. Ullah Shafi listens to an Afghan man's breathing at the Asadabad PRT clinic. Shafi and other Afghan doctors serve as the head practitioners at the clinic formerly run by U.S. Army personnel.

of looked to us for reassurance," said Staff Sgt. Michael Adkins, an operating room specialist. "You could tell there was some hesitation. We had to remind them that they knew more than we did."

But it was only a matter of time before the doctors felt comfortable in their roles treating patients.

"I help them where I can," said Sgt. Gregory A. Hough, the advanced trauma life support noncommissioned officer in charge. "But I mostly try to stand back and let them come to me if they have a question."

For the doctors, it's an accomplishment that produces a tremendous amount of pride.

"The (American) doctors evaluated us and trained us so that we could independently run the clinic," said Dr. Ulhaq Shams, lead doctor at the clinic. "We got a very special experience working with them, and now we are able to do this almost completely on our own."

This clinic is a major step in rebuilding the medical infrastructure of Afghanistan. There are plans to establish other such clinics throughout the country that will be developed in the same manner.

"This clinic is a very smart idea," said Dr. (Lt. Col.) Lonnie L. Imlay, 2nd FST commander and general surgeon. "The doctors

See *Transfer*, Page 15



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

A crew chief from the 68th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) proudly displays the American flag during a flight over central Afghanistan. For the past year, the medics and flight crews of 68th Med. Co. have been saving the lives by doing what they do best – flying into harm's way to help others.

Photo courtesy of 68th Med. Co.

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.af.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.



Bagram hospital performs surgery on local boy injured in IED blast

Army doctors perform Afghanistan's first Krukenberg procedure

Story and photo by Spc. Cheryl Ransford
17th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Helping people live healthy, fulfilling lives after severe injuries can be challenging, especially in Afghanistan.

However, the surgical staff at the combat support hospital at Bagram Airfield has been able to do just that for one boy from Zabul Province who lost his right hand and vision in one eye after an improvised explosive device detonated near him.

With the help of Dr. (Lt. Col.) Inez Kelleher, a 325th Combat Support Hospital pediatric orthopedic surgeon, Habib Ullah will still be able to have a functional limb.

"Being in a third-world country, it is very difficult to get prosthetics," said Kelleher. "So, instead, the Krukenberg procedure is done."

The Krukenberg procedure is a surgery that separates the bones in the forearm to

form a pincer that can be used to grasp and hold things, she said.

"I wasn't sure at first if the boy's father would accept the procedure, so I showed him some photographs of other patients who have had it done," said Kelleher. "After seeing them, his father agreed to have the surgery done."

Having such a dramatic surgery performed can be very hard, and not just for the person receiving the surgery. However, the Ullahs are very accepting of the surgery and the benefits that will be gained from it.

"I want my son to be able to do everyday activities," said Mohib Ullah, Habib's father. "By having this surgery, he will still be able to have use of his right arm."

This is an important capability for Ullah to remain a functioning member of his society.

The surgery to create the pincer is complete, but Ullah's still has a long road ahead of him before the pincer becomes a functioning part of his lifestyle.

"Before he can leave the hospital, he still needs a skin graft for the pincer," said Kelleher.

"Once the swelling goes down and the

skin graft is complete, he will begin physical therapy to activate the muscles in the pincer," she said.

Since the care will take a few weeks to complete, Dr. (Maj.) Herbert Eidt, a 249th Combat Support Hospital orthopedic surgeon, will be conducting the remaining care that needs to be done.

"This is one of the best cases I have ever seen," he said. "I was expecting there to be some complications, but he has begun healing wonderfully. We should be able to do the skin graft, start physical therapy and have him back to his village within the next month."

Since the physical therapy needed for the pincer is fairly limited, it can begin at the hospital and will be completed once he gets back to his village.

Although this is the first time this type of surgery has been done here, Kelleher is confident a demand for the surgery is soon to follow.

"The people of Afghanistan rely heavily on being able to function in society," she said. "By receiving surgeries, such as this, they are able to remain functional and be able to find their way back into society after receiving horrible injuries."



Capt. Vondalyn Simmons (left), a 249th Combat Support Hospital operating room nurse, cleans Habib Ullah's arm, which has been made into a pincer so he can maintain functionality of the limb.



MPs ensure road maneuverability

Story and photos by
Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons
17th Public Affairs Detachment

GHAZNI PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Having passable roads to maneuver on is vital when troops are moving around Afghanistan's mountainous terrain. This is especially true during the winter months when snow can make the roads in Ghazni Province impassable.

But the only way to know for sure if the roads are drivable is for Soldiers to check them daily.

"When we do a route (reconnaissance), we go check out the roads," said Sgt. Joshua

Henson, 25th Military Police Company. "We want to make sure the roads are trafficable. It's important that we are able to use them. If we can't use them, then we have to find alternate routes."

The Soldiers travel the roads future patrols hope to use.

"We don't want anyone to have any surprises," said Spc. Lavan Dawson, 25th MP Co.

If a patrol needs to get to a certain location, they need to know if they can use the usual route, he said. If the usual roads are impassable, the mission may be postponed or an alternate route will be found.

The Soldiers who conduct the route reconnaissance take photos to document the conditions of the roads.

"We take pictures so everyone can have a visual," said Henson.

Eyes are better than a map, he said. On the ground, details appear that are not on any map.

When the Soldiers complete their assessment, they return and brief their findings to the chain of command.

With the information from a route recon, leaders decide to proceed with the mission or conduct more planning, said Dawson.

Route reconnaissance is important even when the weather isn't a problem.

"Everyone wants to know what's in front of them," said Henson.

Checking out routes before the mission provides early detection of anything out of the ordinary, he said.

"Anything that would bring harm to Coalition forces" needs to be checked, said Henson.

Route reconnaissance is also an excellent way for Soldiers to become familiar with the region in which they are operating.

"The more we know about the terrain features of the area, the better we can operate," said Henson.

"It helps us get to know the area better. When we do these recons, we see more of the surrounding villages and they see us. It creates more of a relationship," he said.

Being familiar with the routes is also important so that if the route is changed during the mission, the Soldiers know the alternatives.

"The Number 1 reason we do route recons of the critical points is we want to know what route we can and can't take if there is a problem," he said.

Knowing which routes throughout the region can be used will reduce reaction time for many situations, said Henson.

"We will know exactly which routes we can use if anyone tries to bring harm to the Soldiers at the FOB or to the locals," he said.



Above: Sgts. Shawn McKenna and Joshua Henson, both of the 25th MP Co., discuss the location of a route. **Top:** Sgt. Joshua Henson takes a photo of an intersection that is an important part of the route to a village, scheduled to be assessed by the Ghazni PRT.

Marines search for ACM in Korangal Valley

Story and photos by
Marine Cpl. Rich Mattingly
3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment

KONAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan — Leaping from CH-47 Chinook helicopters hovering just above the jagged, snow-covered mountains that ring Korangal Valley in eastern Afghanistan, Marines from “America’s Battalion,” 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, inserted into different parts of the valley.

The Marines from Companies I and L quickly cordoned and searched several houses believed to be hideouts for mid-level Taliban and other anti-Coalition insurgent leaders and fighters.

“We flew in fast and low and jumped off just outside one of our main target’s house,” said Marine 2nd Lt. Caleb Weiss, a Co. L platoon commander. “They couldn’t have had more than a few moments to react to having entire platoons dropped on their heads.”

The Marines quickly moved in, preventing the possibility of escape for their targets.

With helicopter pilots performing precarious two-wheel landings over the treacherous mountain terrain and the Marines’ and Sailors’ willingness to eagerly take the fight to the enemy no matter the “clime or place,” America’s Battalion sent a clear message that security threats to Afghanistan will not be tolerated or allowed to remain in Korangal Valley.

The operation was a combined effort between the Afghan government and Coalition troops to combat terrorist threats during the winter months.

The battalion has maintained its high operational tempo despite harsh weather



Marine Lance Cpl. Dan Robert, a squad automatic weapon gunner with Co. L, 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines, moves through the deep snow of the Hindu Kush mountains. Robert and his squad were moving to their next objective during cordon and search operations as part of Operation Spurs in eastern Afghanistan.

conditions in an effort to disrupt the activity of anti-government forces here, during a time when Taliban and al-Qaida elements operating in Afghanistan have, in the past, taken time to reorganize and recuperate. Insurgents preparing for renewed attacks on Afghan and Coalition targets in the spring will continue to be sought out by Marine-driven initiatives throughout the harsh Afghan winter, said America’s Battalion Commander Marine Lt. Col. Norm Cooling.

“Regardless of how difficult the terrain and weather might be, we have the training, equipment and commitment to take the fight to those continuing to sponsor and conduct terrorist activities in Konar Province and that is precisely what we are doing. We are going to keep them worried about us bringing the attack to them,” he said.

If insurgents hiding there were distressed to see the arrival of the Marines, many residents of Korangal happily welcomed the Marines and Navy Corpsmen of the battalion. With the assistance of Afghan doctors, Soldiers from the Asadabad Provincial

Reconstruction Team and female military police officers from the 58th MP Co. to aid the Afghan women, they distributed winter coats and medication, and offered medical help to nearly 500 sick villagers and their children throughout the area.

“It’s great to be able to help the people by giving them medicine and supplies they need,” said Spc. Dayna Urbank, 25th MP Co. “We’re not here just to search houses. If we show them respect and help them, they’ll see that their government can offer them a much better way of life than any of the terrorist groups can.”

Several Co. L Marines met with the Korangal village elders, who expressed thanks for the medical supplies and coats. One of the elders, who fought the Soviets with the mujahedeen, said that the new peace in Afghanistan was a welcome change and he looked forward to a time when it wouldn’t be necessary for Marines and the Afghan National Army to look for terrorists in his village.

“We are happy to have the security here and to receive the medical attention you provide us,” said one of the elders who hosted the Marines for a meal in his home.

Coalition forces hope to further solidify support among the village elders of Konar Province by continuing to improve conditions there and eliminate the threats they face from insurgents.



Marines from 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines, board a CH-47 Chinook helicopter in the Korangal Valley during an Operation Spurs insertion.



ENDURING IMAGES

FOB Orgun-E FARP keeps helicopters armed, fueled in support of forces on the ground



Photos by Sgt. Frank Magni



Clockwise from above: Marine Cpl. Daniel Robinson, Marine Wing Support Squadron 473, signals for fueling to begin on an AH-1 Cobra helicopter during a stop at Forward Operating Base Orgun-E's forward arming and refueling point.

Marine Cpl. Phil Heifner, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 773, communicates with the pilot of a Cobra during a refuel at the FOB Orgun-E FARP.

Marine Lance Cpl. Jacob Edwards, HMLA 773, signals to his counterpart that the 20 mm gun on a Cobra has been disarmed. This procedure, as well as others, is followed each time any helicopter lands for refuel to ensure both the ground and air crews remain safe.

Edwards executes another safety measure by disarming the flares on a Cobra while Heifner looks on.

NCO stays with same unit for 35-year career

Story and photo by
Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons
17th Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE GHAZNI, Afghanistan — This year Staff Sgt. Ted Strait will celebrate an important anniversary — 35 years of service. More impressive than his extensive time in service, though, is the fact that he has served all this time with the same unit, the 168th Infantry Regiment, Iowa National Guard.

“I joined July 7, 1970,” said Strait. “I’ve had 35 years of uninterrupted service with the same unit.”

Despite his length of National Guard time, this is Strait’s first deployment. His unit, which makes up Task Force 168, provides force protection to provincial reconstruction teams throughout Afghanistan.

“When they said there was a deployment to Afghanistan, I jumped at the chance,” said Strait. “I’m just tickled to death to finally deploy.”

Strait’s nickname, “Cookie,” stems from the essential billet he fills in eastern Afghanistan.

“The Army runs on two things,” said Strait. “Fuel and food. If a Soldier doesn’t have food in his system, he can’t do his job.”

Working in the dining facility provides challenges to Strait and the other Soldiers working there.

“Coming to the chow hall is more of an experience than simply putting food in your mouth,” said Strait. “I always try to talk to the Soldiers when they come in. Have a joke or story for them.”

“He’s always asking people how he can help them,” said Sgt. Donald Pollard, a food service specialist with

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment.

“He’s a morale booster for us working in the kitchen. He’s always asking what he can do to help,” he said. “If anyone has a problem or just something on his mind, he will take him to the side and let you talk it out. It’s that way with all the Soldiers, not just the ones he works with.”

After the workday is complete, Strait’s room is full of Soldiers who visit him often.

“My room is like Grand Central Station,” said Strait. “People call it the unofficial MWR room. The Soldiers know this is a place where they can kick back and relax.”

“Cookie is nice to everyone,” said Spc. Joe Sawyer, TF 168.

“It’s important to have someone impartial to go to with problems. He treats everyone the same, and is always there to listen to you or just make you laugh if that’s what you need,” he said.

Being a role model is an “additional duty” as Strait likes to say.

“I’m glad the Soldiers come to me for advice or my opinion,” he said. “My youngest son is 30 years old and many of these guys are even younger than him.”

Having served in the same unit for three and a half decades, Strait has known many of the Soldiers serving



Staff Sgt. Ted Strait (right) works in the kitchen at the Ghazni PRT with another cook. Strait has been a cook in the Iowa National Guard for over 35 years and has served his entire career with the 168th Inf. Rgt., which serves OEF as Task Force 168.

with him in Afghanistan since they were children.

“This group of Soldiers is like an extended family for me,” said Strait. “I served with a lot of these young guys’ fathers. I’ve known them since they were little kids. It’s great to see them grow into the fine young men they are.”

Strait plans to stay in the National Guard until he turns 60 years old. That will bring his time served to just over 40 years.

“I tell the guys all the time that the time flies by,” said Strait. “You have to have the right attitude though. This has never been a weekend job to me. I love serving my country and am very proud of my service.”

To Strait, getting through a deployment just takes a positive attitude and some good food.

“All you need to do is treat everyone like a human and individual,” said Strait. “I ask about their day or the mission they just came back from. It’s important to always have a smile for everyone.”

Adopt: Shoes, clothes, school supplies help Afghans

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another way for Coalition forces to foster positive, long-term relationships with the people of Afghanistan.

“This is something that we all wanted to do and it’s great so many Soldiers stepped up and

took an interest in making this happen,” said Capt. Randall Griebel, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 109th Engineer Group, the security force officer in charge.

“When we come out to these villages, we’re showing them that we are concerned, that we

care. The more we help them and communicate with them, the less likely they’ll be to aid the bad guy.”

Soldiers currently serving at FOB Tiger hope the program and the donations will continue to grow after they’ve all redeployed.

“I feel pretty good that I had a hand in doing something good for Afghanistan and the people here,” said Smith. “Building the (Tarin Kowt) road is one thing, but actually being out there helping the people, especially the kids, is another.”

NCOs reinforce importance of accountability

Safeguarding the Coalition

Compiled by Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

AFGHANISTAN — Learning lessons from one's experiences and sharing them with others is one of the most valuable things a Soldier, Sailor, Airman or Marine can do. This is especially true for those placed in leadership positions throughout the U.S. military.

Leaders are tasked with, among many other things, ensuring the safety of those in their charge. A good leader takes from his experiences, good or bad, and shares them with his fellow service members.

The Freedom Watch staff solicited the following vignettes from noncommissioned officers operating throughout Afghanistan, asking them to share their experiences and lessons learned while serving as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

This month's vignettes focus on accountability during deployment and redeployment.

**Sgt. 1st Class
Duaine Strong
HHC, 2nd Bn.,
35th Inf. Rgt.
Supply NCOIC**



“We maintain accountability a couple different ways. Our (personnel) shop does a good job keeping track of our people who are spread out at four different locations. And our supply sergeants stay on top of equipment accountability.

The equipment we get is what we need to fight with. Leaders do pre-combat checks with all their Soldiers before missions, and we also do inventories with our commander.

Every month, we do a 100 percent inventory to make sure we are tracking all our equipment. In some cases, especially when it came to cold weather gear in the higher altitude, proper accountability led to survivability.

Without making sure our Soldiers had everything with them, they may not have survived in those environments.”

**Sgt.
Scott Beauchamp
Co. C, 204th Eng. Bn.
Team leader**



“Our squad leaders break the responsibility for accountability down to the team leaders. That way, each of us is only responsible for about five people, which makes it much easier to maintain proper accountability of our Soldiers and their equipment.

We do spot checks on things like weapons, masks and vehicles, and remind our Soldiers that your equipment is your responsibility.”

**Staff Sgt.
Jessica B.
Vanderberg
325th FSB
Combat health
support NCO**



“Maintaining accountability is very important. Loss or damage to equipment makes a unit less mission-capable. It's important for leaders to do (preventive maintenance checks and services) — daily, weekly, monthly, before, during and after missions.

We also need to make sure the Soldiers have all the clothing items they are supposed to. In the end, that cost falls on the Soldiers. NCOs need to be taking care of their Soldiers to ensure that doesn't happen.”

**Marine Sgt.
Claude A. Watson
Co. I, 3rd Bn.,
3rd Marines
Squad leader**



“As a squad leader, I have to ensure proper accountability is being maintained. I task my team leaders to inspect their Marines every morning, every night and every stop they make. They check for all the equipment.

Our Marines know that their life depends on that gear. And in a machine gun section, we really can't afford to lose anything. The line is depending on us to help keep them alive.”

**Marine Cpl. Rosell
E. Floresmartinez
Co. I, 3rd Bn.,
3rd Marines
Squad leader**



“Maintaining accountability is something that gets tasked down to the team leaders. It's their responsibility to ensure their Marines have the proper gear.

At the same time, everyone is individually accountable as well. Items like (night vision goggles) can be used against us if they fall into enemy hands. And you can't just think you have something, you need to physically check.

In the Marines, we teach everyone to think of it as 'my gear is my life.' Without it, a unit becomes combat ineffective.”

**1st Sgt.
Raymond Kimble
HHC, 3rd BCT**



“We stress accountability in the training meeting every Monday. That's accountability of personnel and equipment. That gets pushed down to the lower levels, where we expect our Soldiers and junior leaders to be very self-conscious about accountability. We also do inventories regularly.

Another key part of accountability, especially with weapons, is maintenance. Ideally, Soldiers should be cleaning their weapons weekly. Our leaders inspect the weapons and report back to me what the status is.

The better accountability units maintain now, the easier it will be to redeploy. It helps everyone. It makes redeploying easier, faster and less stressful.

Additionally, proper accountability maintains the unit's status in being able to support missions.

For leaders, it's important that the junior NCOs who have a very direct relationship with the Soldiers do hands-on inventories and make eye contact with their Soldiers. Leaders at the higher echelons have a lot less contact, so it's on those at the lower echelon, the squad leaders and team leaders, to keep that accountability.”

Women in medicine: Doc treats Afghan women

Story and photo by
Sgt. Stephanie L. Carl
17th Public Affairs Detachment

ASADABAD PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan — A group of Afghan women and their young children huddled on a bench in a one-room building. Many of them traveled a great distance to get here.

They waited patiently while Dr. Neelofar Shafi, dressed in her tan head scarf with matching veil, checked the blood pressure of an elderly woman.

Shafi is the only female doctor in this area of Afghanistan. She treats an average of 50 women a day at the Asadabad Provincial Reconstruction Team clinic in eastern Afghanistan's Konar Province.

"I'm happy so many women come to see me," said Shafi. "Day-by-day, the number of patients I treat increases."

This is a sign that word of the clinic is spreading, and the women of the province are developing trust in Shafi.

"The majority of the people in our province are uneducated," she said. "I am doing my best to help educate the women."

Shafi teaches the women family planning, personal hygiene and health, but is careful not to overstep the boundaries of her culture, as she is well aware of the sensitivities on these topics and how quickly others can be offended.

"I have had some women get angry when I am trying to teach them," she said. "But I do my best to teach them in a polite method."



Dr. Neelofar Shafi hands an Afghan woman medication to treat her upper respiratory infection. Shafi treats many women each day at the Asadabad PRT clinic.

As a whole, the method seems to be working. Shafi's training has evolved to include the husbands. She educates them about possible methods of birth control and how they work, as well as the benefits. Her husband, Dr. Ullah Shafi, also a doctor at the clinic, is helping her with the process.

"We work together to teach the people as much as we can," he said. "We want to do whatever we can to make our country better."

But the process is slow. Shafi is still dealing with basic health problems.

"Most of the problems my wife treats can be prevented easily," said her husband.

In fact, many problems can be avoided by proper hygiene, so Shafi is educating the women on how to properly care for their bodies. Nearly every woman who enters the clinic leaves with a bottle of shampoo, a basic item that can lead to better health.

Shafi also ensures she conducts careful and thorough exams, addressing her patients' concerns and issuing medication.

"I am the only female doctor in this area, and I know the women rely on me," she said. "I am happy that I am able to help them, and I want to continue doing so. I want to serve the community and our people to help make this a better place."



Air Force 1st Lt. J. Elaine Hunnicutt

"Aid and assistance"

Sgt. Richard Schandorff, a 209th Military Police Company medic, cleans a cut on an injured man at the site of a three-car collision between Shindand and Herat last month. Schandorff has been in Afghanistan since April and has treated patients from more than 10 major accidents during his tour.

Transfer: Coalition turns over Asadabad clinic to local doctors

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are able to provide care for day-to-day problems, and they also give patients a place to come if they need long-term care.”

Perhaps the most important part of the clinic is the support it brings to the infrastructure of Afghanistan.

“Long after we’re gone, they’ll still be here,” said Hough.

“We’ve helped provide some stability,” said Imlay. “Change isn’t going to come next week or next month. The difference that this clinic makes will be seen years from now, and it readily demonstrates that we’re trying to make lives better.”

The Afghan doctors also recognize that improvement is a long process, but are happy to be able to do their part.

“This was the first step in the development of our country,” said Shams. “Eventually, we will have this kind of clinic in every sector of Afghanistan.”



Dr. Ulhaq Shams examines an Afghan man's ribs at the Asadabad PRT clinic. The clinic was transferred in January from the Coalition to local doctors who will continue to treat their fellow countrymen and women.



Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons

An up-armored HMMWV turns around at an intersection in a small village near the Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team. The QRF team from Ghazni PRT conducts patrols to ensure the routes they need are passable. If the roads can't be traversed, the Soldiers find alternate routes.

QRF *continued from Page 6*

These patrols also add to the Coalition presence in the region.

“We go through villages to show that the Coalition is here,” said Henson. “It helps the overall security of the area.”

The QRF mission is shared by the different units operating out of the PRT.

But no matter who is on call, the mission of the QRF doesn't change.

“We are immediate support for our fellow Soldiers working out in the area,” said Henson. “It's important that we are always ready to reinforce our fellow Soldiers.”

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



Come with me

Dari

Haum rahay man beya
(howm rah-hay maun bay-ya)

Pashtu

Ma sara raza
(Mah sah-rah rah-zah)

Afghan cultural tidbit

The most festive holiday celebrated by Afghans, and Iranians, is Nawroz, the new year celebration March 21, the vernal equinox. Literally meaning 'new day,' Nawroz is celebrated with picnics, similar to American cookouts, and lavish meals. The festival has its roots in Zoroastrianism, a religion brought from Persia before the rise of Islam.

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Commo check

Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Bemis, 3rd Bn., 116th Inf. Rgt., checks the radio in his HMMWV near Ghazni PRT in central Afghanistan. Photo by Sgt. Jennifer S. Emmons